PARTNERS IN EDUCATION
AN ACTION PLAN

YOUR CHILD'S FUTURE
A NEW PLAN FOR EDUCATION

Yukon
Education

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Partners in Education: An Action Plan

Introduction

The Goal of Education Reform

The Government of the Yukon determined early in its mandate that, among its many initiatives, education reform was to be a high priority. Work over the past three years to seek public input through the Education Act Task Force, the Joint Commission on Indian Education and Training and through other education interest groups is representative of this major government commitment.

We are now on the verge of implementing a comprehensive reform package which builds on the strengths of the existing education system, and which reflects the interests of all Yukon people. This document and the companion publication, *A Proposal for the New Education Act*, provide details of this government's intended course of action through changes to legislation and specific Department of Education policies and programs. These proposed changes are to be based on the government's philosophy and objectives which are outlined in this publication.

There are two central themes underlying this reform. First, government is intent on providing high quality education through a school system designed to meet the needs of all Yukon people, and second, government holds a basic belief that greater public participation is an important part of achieving this high quality in our education system.

This reform is particularly timely. The Yukon's Indian people have given strong endorsement to a Land Claims Framework Agreement within which education is a major focus. We believe that the steps outlined in these position papers will provide an excellent starting point for band final agreement negotiations.

If there has been one common message expressed by Yukon people through consultation, it is that education must be viewed as more than just a teacher in a schoolroom with a blackboard. Education is a lifelong activity, people learning from formal instructional settings, from life experience and from self-development. Educational institutions are an important part of that overall process, but it must be stressed that they form only one part of that world of learning. It is with this understanding in mind that the government has prepared the two documents in this package.

As a final step in public consultation, the government would welcome hearing your views on these documents. We would appreciate receiving your comments sometime before the end of November so that they can be used to help determine the final shape of the new Education Act.

What The Yukon's People Have Said About Public School Education

As we prepare to enter the 21st century there is a growing awareness of numerous issues that either have or could have a major impact on the delivery of education in the public school system. We know that students have varying educational needs. The traditional family is not the experience of every child who goes to school. The directions of future economic growth in the territory are still being defined. Technology has expanded the limits of the imagination, and is increasing the ways in which people can have access to learning that can be fun and adventurous in school or at home.

We are also keenly aware of the role which individual rights and obligations play within a public system of education. Increasingly, demands are made for a more equitable system, for greater flexibility and responsiveness within that system. In short, more is expected of the public school system than ever before in the history of public education.

These messages were heard on numerous occasions during public discussions held by the Joint Commission on Indian Education and Training and the Education Act Task Force. They are also concerns voiced by parents time and time again at school committee meetings, at education conferences and in every day discussions between parents and teachers.

The government believes that these proposed reforms are sensitive to the views of Yukon people, views which have been expressed during extensive public consultation over the past three years.

How the Pieces of Reform Fit Together

There are a number of pieces in this education reform package. There is a statement of philosophy of education along with more specific objectives which together are to guide the government and other partners in education in providing a high quality of education in the Yukon's public schools. The philosophy and objectives are provided in this publication. Along with these global statements are specific initiatives identified in the last section, *Education at Work - Implementing Change.*

An entire document, *A Proposal for the New Education Act,* which you will find in this package is devoted to the general reform of education.

So, where does the Education Act, this new piece of legislation, fit into the picture, and how will it affect the general reform?

The Education Act will provide Yukon society with the necessary 'teeth' to implement change in the education system. For instance, once the legislation is in place, school committees will be given powers which cannot be taken from them without an actual change being made to the Education Act. It is legislation — documents which are passed by the people's representatives — that gives everyone in this society a general understanding of their rights, their responsibilities and their relationship with, and duties to, one another. The acts passed by the Yukon Legislature are the backbone of our society.

The pieces of this education reform should not be viewed in isolation from one another. It is important to see the Education Act as merely an instrument to allow the work to be done, to give the Yukon people — students, teachers, parents, the community and government — the opportunity to move into new directions in education.

This paper, *Partners in Education: An Action Plan,* provides an overview of where the government intends to direct public education. It is a comprehensive framework, leading from a general statement of philosophy and the importance of partnerships in education, to a section on objectives of this government which will continue to guide work in the education field. Finally, specific departmental activities, to be implemented over the short, medium and long term as part of a strategic plan of action, are outlined.

A Comprehensive Philosophy of Education

The comment was made by a number of parents during the Education Act Task Force hearings that the government should produce a statement of philosophy respecting the provision of educational services in the Yukon territory. The government is committed to the philosophical statement noted below, and to setting directions which are consistent with this philosophy.

> Public education should prepare people for life and work in the Yukon, Canada and the world, and promote in the community a love of learning.

Consistent with this philosophy, the education system in the Yukon strives to provide a creative and dynamic learning environment for students. Such an environment enables individual students to develop a sense of self-worth. By creating a place for learning where students are encouraged to reach their maximum potential they will become far better equipped to take on productive, responsible and self-reliant roles in society. If a solid educational foundation is achieved, individuals will be more able to lead personally rewarding lives, secure in what is clearly a continuously changing world.

This philosophy focuses on the development of students in a manner consistent with their personal aspirations. The central focus of this philosophy is the individual student, and his or her capacity to learn, to develop and to grow in our society.

In order to develop the full potential of all pupils, the education system must provide equal opportunity for success to each student. The goal of an education system goes beyond the formal graduation ceremony. The system must prepare individuals for the world outside school.

Equal opportunity means more than mere equal access to a physical classroom and to teachers who offer a set range of courses. Teaching methods, curricula, teaching materials, counselling services, indeed all activities of schools must be designed to equalize opportunity, to give each student what he or she needs to both develop and work toward individual goals.

This philosophy recognizes the world's economic realities and complexities. These economic realities were discussed in the Yukon 2000 process. Education was mentioned time and time again as an essential part of economic development in the territory. Although the Yukon economy is developing consistently in some areas, it will continue to experience change in others. In mind of this reality, "education for the 21st century" will greatly assist Yukon people in finding employment, thereby contributing to their own security and to the general strength of the society.

The comprehensive philosophy for public school education in the territory must be reflected and incorporated in departmental policies, goals and objectives. New initiatives considered by the Department of Education will be developed with this philosophy as their base. The government is committed to making the philosophy a reality in Yukon schools.

A Partnership in Education

As a necessary part of meeting the philosophy of education, and as a critical part of providing good educational services to all students it is essential to have an effective partnership among students, teachers, parents, the community and government.

The Yukon's public school system must be able to respond to the demands of a continuously changing world. It must also take a leading role as a catalyst of change that will permit our students to participate fully in the future of the Yukon, of Canada, and of the world. However, it has become clear that the public school system cannot teach students everything. John I. Goodlad accurately describes the situation in which public school systems presently find themselves in his book entitled, *A Place Called School: Prospects for the Future:*

> "As a society becomes more complex, more relative, more ambiguous, and less structured, demands upon the individual multiply. We have created a world in which there no longer is a common body of information that everyone must or can learn. The only hope for meeting the demands of the future is the development of people who are capable of assuming responsibility for their own needs. Schools should help every child to prepare for a world of rapid changes and unforeseeable demands in which continuing education throughout adult life should be a normal expectation." p. 56

This statement provides insight into the role schools and the larger system of education must fulfill in society. It is evident that the student, the parent, the community and those in the school system all play an important role in meeting the goal of the student's right to an appropriate education.

If our future is to be one of continuous change where, more than ever before, success will be directly linked to the ability to think creatively and critically, a public school system is obliged to provide each student with the intellectual tools required to live and to succeed in such a world. Each student must be taught how to learn, how to think independently, and how to communicate that which has been learned. It is important for students to realize that learning can be enjoyable, and that it is a necessary life-long process.

It must be understood that the enactment of new legislation and the statement of departmental objectives by this government cannot by themselves answer every important educational issue faced by society. An expectation that they can will detrimentally affect any attempts to improve the present education system.

For example, policies designed to decrease the number of drop-outs and to increase the level of literacy in society, though an important starting point, do not in themselves solve the problem of illiteracy. Such policies require the dedication of all education partners if they are going to be successful in ensuring that illiterate members of the Yukon society achieve the basic skills which will allow them to participate more fully as members of society. The combination of thoughtful policy and effective partnership in education, a partnership between parents, students, teachers, the community and government, is the key to the enduring economic and social success of the Yukon.

As a partner in education, a parent has a critical role to play in encouraging and contributing to a child's desire to learn. A child who receives such invaluable support will be more likely to enjoy success at school.

The teacher is vital in opening the door for students to mature, to develop new skills, and to grow in society. The importance of the time teachers spend with the Yukon's youth cannot be overstated.

The role of government in the education partnership is to fund through public taxation and to enable the provision

of educational opportunity, to provide a setting in which education becomes a challenging and stimulating part of an individual's growth.

In order to meet the needs of the next century, all Yukon people must be involved in the ongoing development of the education system. With the assistance of the other educational partners, the Department of Education can meet each element of this philosophy through its objectives, policies and programs.

Objectives of Public School Education

The government's philosophy of education is a fundamental part of setting directions for public education. The philosophy cannot, by itself, provide the direction required for professional educators and administrators to develop and operate a system of education. To further provide a foundation for this work, a set of objectives has been developed to give additional direction.

The central themes which underlie these educational objectives are **universal quality education** to meet individual needs, and **greater public participation** in the education system. These themes are reflected throughout.

The following objectives are the government's education priorities. They are not necessarily listed in order of importance, but together form a sound base for education in the territory. The government's initiatives outlined in the last pages of this publication and the specifics on the legislation noted in the companion document relate closely to these objectives.

* To ensure the right to education

It is necessary to ensure that each student is provided with the opportunity to fulfill his or her right to education. The government's commitment to both equality of access and equality of opportunity is an important orientation to meeting this objective.

* To develop self-worth through a positive educational environment

Self-worth can grow in a positive learning environment, one which gives credit to a student's strengths and abilities and which fosters a sense of personal worth. A strong sense of self-worth is the foundation for personal development without which an individual is restricted in taking full advantage of available educational opportunities. To further develop an educational environment where self-worth can flourish is both a goal and a challenge for today's educators.

* To provide opportunities to reach maximum potential

The opportunity for each student to achieve his or her maximum potential through the public school system is to be a primary goal. Excellence in teaching, appropriate teaching methods, curricula and teaching materials are important parts of the recipe for success. This is an objective of particular importance in order to meet the needs expressed in *Kwiya*, the final report of the Joint Commission on Indian Education and Training.

* To promote personal growth in Yukon society

The government is committed to providing a learning environment that will encourage personal growth and promote a person's ability to become an effective participant in Yukon society, a society built on the heritage of all Yukon peoples.

* To promote the recognition of equality among Yukon peoples

The recognition of equality among the peoples of the Yukon is to be promoted through the public education system. Students can develop a better understanding of themselves and respect for those around them if they are placed in an environment which respects the cultural differences of individuals, and promotes the wealth of this cultural diversity. Interaction of diverse cultures within the education system is an important part of a healthy society.

* **To develop critical and creative thinking skills for today's world**

  The development of critical and creative thinking and information assessment skills are important components of an education system. These skills are essential for participation in a world of rapid information growth.

* **To promote understanding of the history and values of Yukon Indian people**

  Each student is to be educated in the history and values of the Indian culture in order to heighten understanding of the Yukon and its peoples.

* **To increase awareness and appreciation of the Yukon's natural environment**

  Living closely with the natural environment is a part of life for many Yukon people, as is clearly reflected in the kinds of jobs we hold, our recreational pursuits and our art and literature. It is as much part of the Yukon's identity as are its people and history. The environment and its conservation are integral to the Yukon way of life. The role of the environment in our lives will be an important focus of curriculum development initiatives.

* **To encourage understanding and democratic participation within the education system**

  Encouraging democratic participation in the public school system is a necessary component of a quality education system in which parents and interested citizens can take an active part. An educated population that is willing and capable of serving in the public interest will ensure that local participation in the public school system is effective.

* **To provide basic standards of education**

  Educational services in the public schools of all communities are to be based on consistent standards so that students may transfer smoothly to other schools within the Yukon or to other parts of Canada. This can be accomplished through consistent programming from kindergarten through high school. The core curriculum will be supplemented by program development sensitive to the varying needs of each Yukon community and to the needs of the Yukon's Indian people.

* **To prepare for participation in a Yukon, Canadian and world society**

  Education must prepare students to participate in the Yukon and the broader Canadian society, and to understand this in the context of the world in which we all live. Curriculum must be relevant to Yukon society but must also prepare each student to take his or her place in Canadian society and in the larger world.

* **To encourage the development of basic skills**

  Each student is to be given the opportunity to acquire basic skills. The level at which students are able to participate in a continuously changing world depends on how well they have mastered the following skills: the ability to read, write, and perform basic arithmetical operations and to understand mathematical concepts; the ability to acquire ideas through reading and listening; and the ability to develop aesthetic sensitivity to the world around them.

  The ability to communicate is a basic skill which is critical in every part of work and leisure today. In an age where information exchange is a foundation of the everyday world, the importance of effective writing and public speaking cannot be underestimated.

* **To provide schooling in a supportive environment**

  A final objective is for the government to offer educational programming in an environment which supports the student and, wherever possible, to deliver such programs within the student's home community. Close relationships must be maintained between a community and its school or schools, and, in addition to regular counselling, individual counselling and similar support programs must be provided to students who leave their home communities to attend public school elsewhere in the territory.

These objectives provide a comprehensive framework for the government's commitment to education. The following section outlines the ways in which the objectives are to be translated into specific actions which will bring about significant developments in public education in the Yukon.

Education at Work - Implementing Change

The central themes which underlie the government's educational objectives are **universal quality education** to meet individual needs, and **greater public participation** in the education system. Significant efforts have been made in recent years to bring departmental policies and initiatives in line with these themes. Much more is to be done to strengthen education in the territory. This commitment is clearly reflected in the specific initiatives which are outlined in this section.

Emphasis will be placed on the opportunity for all individuals to participate in a community partnership. As you will see by reading the companion document, *A Proposal for the New Education Act*, these themes will be reflected in the new Education Act. The act will provide for more public involvement and responsibility in the operation of schools, through devolution of a number of responsibilities to the community level. The objectives identified in the preceding section and these themes of quality education and partnership will also be reflected in all new departmental activities many of which are outlined below.

In many cases work has started on these initiatives. Some projects, such as the creation of a 'made in Yukon' curriculum will take time to put in place. Others, such as the development of culturally sensitive curriculum modules will take place in stages; much will depend on the directions set by Yukon Indian people and the time required to produce valuable, lasting results. Many initiatives can be implemented today, or soon after the Education Act is in place. The government will continue to provide updates on the progress of these initiatives, and the overall package of reform.

It is important to recognize that these initiatives are part of a package of reform encompassing the Education Act, revisions to government policy, redefinition of roles in the education system and program realignment. This is a comprehensive reform, where the various pieces are combined to achieve quality in education. For instance, the work on increasing authority at the community level will be supported through new powers given to the school committees in the Education Act. At the same time, specific policies put in place by a school committee will define what works best for their community.

A reality all must face is that resources are not limitless. The Yukon ranks near the top among jurisdictions in Canada in the amount it spends on education. The various reform initiatives noted below will be put in place to reflect not only the educational philosophy and objectives of this government, and the continued strong commitment to quality public education, but also the importance of cost-effectiveness and efficiency. This is a necessary part of good government management and the responsible use of public funds.

- ### Enhanced authority at the community level

  More authority for education will be transferred to the community level through the school committee. The regional superintendent's role is presently one of monitoring and general control. In future, regional superintendents will also help the school committees in taking on their new responsibilities, and will work closely with the committees in defining community education goals and in making these goals a reality.

  Steps have been taken to move in this direction. With the passing of the Education Act, the powers of school committees will be further enhanced.

- ### Public Schools reorganization

  Consistent with this change in roles, the government will also be reorganizing the Department of Education's Public Schools Branch to more appropriately reflect its goal of providing services in a more effective way to the communities and schools.

  Preparation for these changes has started, and it is anticipated that the new structure will be in place by the fall of 1989.

* **School committee authority over the operations budget**

School committees will be given authority over the operations budget of the school. The school committee will be able to put into effect those priorities which it sees as essential for educational development in the community. This funding, along with responsibilities regarding the development of the community's school budget, will give a school committee a substantial say in the operations of the school.

* **Accelerating development of culturally sensitive curriculum**

Work on the development of culturally sensitive curriculum and materials will be accelerated through increased resources in this area.

The position of Native Curriculum Co-ordinator has recently been filled, and the co-ordinator has begun work under the authority of the Indian Curriculum Development Committee.

The co-ordinator and committee will facilitate community involvement in the development of appropriate changes.

* **Developing a 'made in Yukon' curriculum**

These steps in curriculum development and modification are consistent with a general long-term government goal to establish a Yukon curriculum, one which is not dependent on education systems in the provinces. This is an incremental process, one which will take considerable time and substantial resources.

The government will be taking further steps in this direction in 1989.

* **Eliminating sexual stereotyping**

The government is committed to ensuring that all curriculum materials used in Yukon schools are not sexist in implication. The Department of Education will continue to ensure that all materials developed for use in public schools are well balanced in their representation of men and women in the various work-related and social roles which are encountered in today's world.

Additional support in career counselling will be of benefit to all Yukon students, and particularly for young women. It will ensure that young women are aware of the full range of career options available to them. This will continue to be an important service provided in Yukon schools.

* **Enhancing critical thinking skills**

Developing an individual's analytical and judgment skills provides that person with the ability to judge, assess, evaluate and from there, reach conclusions. We are passing out of what has been commonly referred to as the technological age, and into one where knowledge and the ability to use information is critical. Through education, students must be given the tools to use the information they receive, and more importantly the ability to find information from which they can reach informed conclusions.

Identifying options for critical thinking skills development, such as professional development for teachers, will be a priority. Emphasis in this area is becoming more important today, and will be essential in the world of the 1990s and beyond.

* **Developing an Indian teacher training program**

An assessment of teacher training programs offered elsewhere in the North is underway, along with an analysis of specific Yukon needs, in order to assist the Department of Education in its development of a culturally sensitive, community based Indian teacher training program.

* **Increased professional development**

The government will be supporting increased professional development for teachers and school administrators. This will ensure that the professionals providing services at the community level are on the leading edge of educational change, and are able to provide the highest quality instruction to Yukon students.

This enhancement will commence in the 1989 - 1990 school year.

* **Implementing a special education policy**

With respect to the development of special education policies for the public school system, an overall policy and procedures manual and accompanying handbook are being completed. The policy will be implemented in the immediate future as an important part of this comprehensive reform package.

Through the special education initiatives, care will be taken to address the problem of students with special needs including those with behavioural problems. Traditionally these students have been, as a last resort, suspended to reduce their disruptive effect on the classroom. These individuals have in most cases had no alternatives to acquiring a basic education, and often have appeared at some later point in the Courts. Consistent with this government's conviction that an education is a basic right, special efforts will be taken to define and provide alternate educational programming for these students. Suspension will no longer be the education system's final solution for these young people.

This policy development meets the government's interest in focusing on the individual, and assisting that person to achieve his or her maximum potential.

* **Taking a new approach to personal counselling**

The issue of resources for personal counselling has been a particular focus of many people within the communities. A unique approach to providing counselling is being considered by the government.

Counsellor training and support will be given to individuals in the communities who are generally looked up to by the community and especially its youth. They will be asked to provide a less structured, and more natural community-based personal counselling service through an open door policy for those youth seeking guidance.

Work toward implementing this option will commence next year.

* **Enhancing budgets for inter-community travel**

As a final point, the government has heard numerous calls from the Yukon public to enhance budgets for inter-community events. Educational field trips and sporting events are examples of events the government is committed to supporting.

These activities are part of a comprehensive education, one where new experiences are valued. This, too, is part of the initiatives the government is moving to implement.

This range of intiatives, along with the Education Act and the government's objectives in education, will set the stage for a comprehensive and strengthened system of education for the Yukon.

Conclusion

We live in a world of continual change. We have the responsibility to prepare our children for an increasingly complex society. To give our children every chance to participate in this society, we must take care in matching the education system to their needs. By ensuring that each child has a solid educational foundation that will meet the demands of the future, we will secure a far greater chance for each child's success.

This document presents the government's plan through which all partners in education can contribute to the the development and improvement of the education system. To see how the objectives outlined in this document will be reflected in the new Education Act, please read the companion paper, *A Proposal for the new Education Act*.

WHO'S WHO IN EDUCATION....

Their Current Roles and Responsibilities

And How They Fit Into the Education Partnership

Students, parents and teachers are at the forefront of the education partnership. Supporting them are a number of advisory groups and departmental staff whose current roles and responsibilities are outlined below.

School Committees

- ❒ provide advice to school principals and the regional superintendents regarding general education matters affecting their schools
- ❒ provide input to hiring of principals
- ❒ take part in the Education Council - the majority on the Education Council are elected school committee members who represent their regions.

The Education Council

- ❒ advises the Minister on all matters affecting education
- ❒ is the school committees' "umbrella group" on education policy matters
- ❒ is made up of 8 elected school committee representatives, and 2 members appointed by the Minister of Education

School Principals

- ❒ oversee the organization, administration and supervision of their schools
- ❒ consult with school committees on various educational matters in their schools
- ❒ report to a regional school superintendent

The Regional School Superintendents

- ❒ provide general supervision over the schools in their region
- ❒ assist and advise school committees
- ❒ report to the Superintendent of Schools

The Superintendent of Schools

- ❒ provides general supervision over all Yukon public schools
- ❒ is the Assistant Deputy Minister of Education for Public Schools
- ❒ reports to the Deputy Minister of Education

Central Resource Staff

- ❒ provide special education, programming, counselling and teacher support services to schools throughout the Yukon
- ❒ report to the Superintendent of Schools

A Count of the Key Members of the Education Partnership....

Yukon Public School Students

- ❒ As of September 1987, there were 4,925 students enrolled in Yukon schools, kindergarten through Grade 12, 2,572 male and 2,353 female*
- ❒ A student profile reported 1,006 (20.4%) Native students, 3,164 (64.2%) non-Native students***
- ❒ 20.2% of the Yukon enrollment reported Catholic as their primary religion, 27.4% Protestant, and 28.9% reported other religions*
- ❒ Yukon enrollment is broken into 3 programs: English, 92.5%, French Immersion 6.5% and French First Language, 1.0%*
- ❒ There were 611 students enrolled in Native language programs in the 87/88 school year**
- ❒ The school with the largest enrollment was F.H. Collins Secondary School in Whitehorse (747), the smallest enrollment, Beaver Creek School (6)*

Teachers

- As of September 1987, there were 319 teachers in 26 Yukon schools*
- There was the equivalent of 16.5 Native language instructors in Yukon rural communities. Whitehorse classes are taught by Yukon Native Language Centre staff
- There were 5.5 positions for French teachers in the French First Language program, and 17.5 positions for French Immersion Teachers**
- In the Yukon school system, the overall pupil/teacher ratio is approximately 15 to 1. In comparison, the B.C. pupil/teacher ratio is approximately 20 pupils per teacher**

* Yukon Bureau of Statistics, September 1987

** Department of Education Statistics, September 1987
(88/89 statistics not available at time of printing)

*** Does not total 100% due to non-response to the statistics questionnaire